

We Will Do Better

Like so many Americans, we are hurting. The appalling death of George Floyd has made painfully visible the injustices black people have experienced far too often for years and years and years. Mr. Floyd's death is not a singular event; various versions of it—Ahmaud Aubery, Breonna Taylor, Medgar Evers, Ed Johnson, and countless others—have taken place across our nation for centuries. This brutality and injustice must stop. Like millions of Americans, we stand united with people of color and with those across the country and around the world who demand that things must change.

If there is anything positive about the last few days, it is the broad coalition of diverse people who have come together peacefully demanding change. We know that it is far past time to address the systemic racism that ends lives needlessly, denies many young people access to a future of productivity and prosperity, and diminishes the very ideals upon which our nation was founded—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We know that we can do better. We know that we must do better—starting today.

The Public Education Foundation is a non-profit community organization. Our mission is to increase the achievement of local students so that all children succeed in learning and in life. To this end, the thirty-one-year history of PEF has always been one of striving to achieve excellence and equity in schools, especially schools serving our most disadvantaged children. Our work with school leaders and teachers has always been about social justice and supporting high achievement and true opportunity for all. Our work helping economically disadvantaged students and students of color who want to be the first in their family to go to and graduate from college has always been about supporting the next wave of difference makers.

We are proud of this work and our long history of partnering with the district to support the principals, teachers, families, and students of Hamilton County Schools. We believe in the power of public education to transform communities. We believe every student can succeed, regardless of neighborhood or background. We believe all children need to be safe, nurtured, and supported to succeed. We believe success comes in many forms – learners have unique needs, talents, and aspirations. We believe equity is about fairness, opportunities, and inclusion, and is possible when practiced every day, at every level. We believe all public schools must have highly effective teachers and leaders who, in turn, have excellent ongoing training and support. We believe creating and sustaining high-performing public schools demands the support of an entire community.

But the events of the last few days remind us that we must do more. In the weeks to come, we are committed to continuing to develop strategies in collaboration with valued partners as we examine our work at PEF. We are committed to making changes to ensure that we and the leaders we develop, the teachers we prepare, and the students we support will help lead our community and our nation to be more just, equitable, and prosperous.

We know that PEF can only achieve its mission when there is true justice and true opportunity for all, particularly those affected by racial injustice every day. We are committed to doing all that we can to make this a reality.

PEF Senior Leadership Team

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